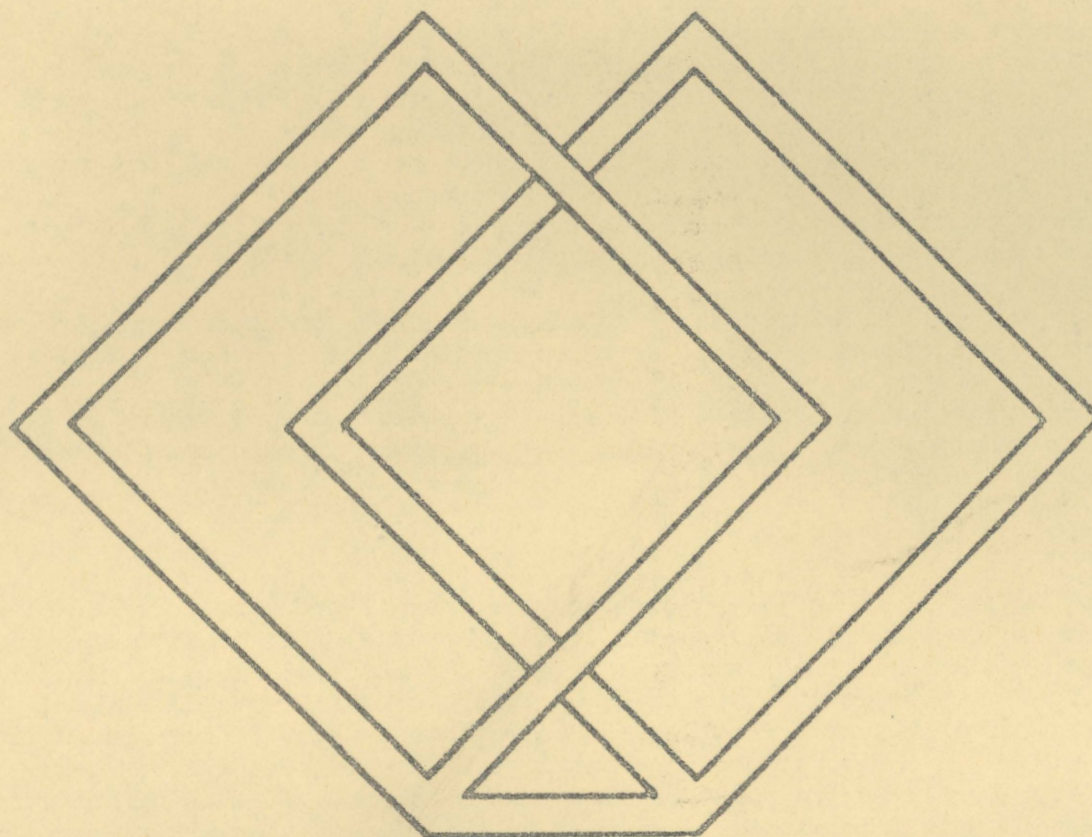


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Editorial

by Frank Gillespie.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF UFO RESEARCH

Whatever UFOs may be, a compelling case can be made for continuing research into the subject. If they are natural phenomena, we need to know the Laws of Nature which are involved; if they are man-made, we need to know who is responsible, and how the objects are produced and controlled; if mind-induced, why the recent upsurge in mental abnormality; if psychic phenomena, does this mean there is life after death? It is only if extraterrestrials are involved that research might be a complete waste of time, for the very good reason that the matter is largely out of our control. If ETs don't want us to know what is going on, there's not likely to be very much we can do about it.

The numerous ET debunkers all seem to think that because they can prove that there is no extraterrestrial factor involved in UFOs, we should promptly drop all investigation and research, and allow them to wallow in their ignorance. Instead of this, they should be encouraging us to redouble our efforts; because, according to them, there is even more reason than we first thought to find out the nature and origin of UFOs.

THE LOGO

The new logo obviously represents two square frames joined by a single rod, and it will appear (to most people) that the two squares are in the same plane. If the diagram is rotated 45° anticlockwise, it will now appear (to most people) that the two squares are in different planes, and that what was formerly just a flat diagram represents a truly 3-dimensional object.

The message inherent in the logo is that what we perceive depends very largely on the point of view that we adopt. It also demonstrates that some people recognise reality with ease, while others may have great difficulty in doing so. Both of these concepts are particularly relevant in the field of UFO research; and I hope the logo will serve as an occasional reminder to UFO-logists that we work in a highly subjective environment.

Almost immediately following the flowering of the "flying saucer" (now UFO) phenomena in the late 1940's, extraterrestrial intelligence (ETI) was suggested as at least a partial explanation by some military, government, and scientific officials, and some of the public too, for this mysterious phenomena. This was partly due to the behaviour of the objects as recorded by witnesses and independent instruments (radar, motion picture film, etc.); the duration of the "fad" as never before has mass hysteria or hallucinations (if that's what it was) been so long enduring or so widespread; and the fact that try as the military and scientific community could, they could never eliminate a residue of UFO reports that just couldn't be put down to hoaxes, natural phenomena, hallucinations, insufficient data, etc. Further, the quality and quantity of the witness(es) were frequently all that one could ever hope for. For these reasons and more, the argument (by process of elimination) ran, then as now, UFOs therefore ETI, and as this has appeared and been debated in the media throughout the world, I won't repeat it here.

Rather, I invert the two subjects and argue ETI therefore UFOs!

As The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy points out, "Space is big. Really big. You just won't believe how vastly hugely mindbogglingly big it is." Analogies to terrestrial dimensions, time, distances, and numbers, have been frequently done, yet still tend to elude our mental grasp. Even our own galaxy has, does, and will contain such numbers of stellar objects, that the average human mind just cannot come to grips with such quantity. But still the fact remains and we just have to accept it as a "given" in the great cosmic scheme of things.

But with that starting point, and using the known laws of physics and chemistry, backed up with actual data acquired by both remote sensing and laboratory experiments and analysis, often computer simulations, and theory too, along with a touch of the philosophical principle of mediocrity (that is, our sun, solar system, planet earth, terrestrial life, and Homo sapiens are the John Average Doe in the cosmos), a strong, but statistical, case can be made for the following:

Our sun is not unique or even rare.

Our planetary system is not unique or even rare.

Our earth is not a unique or even rare sort of planetary body.

The origin of life is not a one-off miracle but a common statistic.

That life should often beget intelligent life.

That intelligent life will in many cases acquire a technology (based on the universal laws of physics and chemistry) akin to ours, some of course behind, some equal to, and some (most) far in advance of our own.

Hence we are not alone as a technological intelligent life form, and that it would be to repeat historical blunders by making such an egotistical statement to the contrary, even though no hard evidence for the existence of ETI is yet to hand (lack of evidence is not the same as evidence of lack). And thus the search for extraterrestrial life in general (the Viking probes to Mars) and ETI in particular, has recently started. Although these efforts have been small; the search still in infancy, it is never-the-less another giant leap for mankind; his evolution into a cosmic being, and a solid form of putting one's time, effort, energy and money where his mouth is!

Further, just as our sun, solar system, and planet earth is only some 25% to 33% of the age of the galaxy, so too would our technological civilisation be much younger than most other civilisations, many of which could easily have existed for more than twice as long as our whole planet (farless ourselves) has existed.

Premise One: There exists in our galaxy right now, at least one, and probably many other technological civilisations, and that that other civilisation(s) is astronomically older and more advanced (technologically if nothing else) than our own.

The above, however, doesn't even remotely imply the existence of UFOs in and around our near-earth environment. Such a civilisation(s) have got to have a desire to, hence travel into space.

There are numerous positive and logical reasons why a technological (hence scientific) civilisation would venture into space. In fact, it is quite possible that there are more extraterrestrial beings living artificially in space, than naturally on planetary surfaces. To paraphrase the well worn phrase of rocket pioneer Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, "planets maybe the cradle of technological civilisations, but one cannot live in the cradle forever".

One such reason for leaving the cradle is obviously exploration. A basic scientific curiosity about what is out there, including the potential discovery of alien life forms.

Another is exploitation of the abundant natural (mineral and energy) resources to be had in space, which are orders of magnitudes

greater than that available on any finite planetary surface, as we ourselves are becoming all too painfully aware.

Further, it can become a bit crowded on a finite surface when you run out of room to expand. And as we all know, the combination of population growth coupled with the demands (for food, energy, goods, etc.) by that population, with just that bit of technological misuse, can rapidly lead to the fouling of the home cradle.

The above observations suggest positive reasons for the colonisation of space as a solution to the problems, either on uninhabited planetary surfaces, or (and far easier) in artificially constructed, ecologically self-contained, abodes - which could be the size of small planets if desired. With respect to artificial space colonies, the advantages are many. A controlled environment for one - no nasty weather, volcanoes, earthquakes, etc. A controlled gravity (actually centrifugal force). If you get a bit crowded, add on an extension - better yet, construct a new colony - there's light years of room to expand in. Experience relative freedom from resource limitations - there is plenty of materials to be had from the uninhabited planets, asteroids, moons, and other debris. There would also be relative freedom from territorial disputes in self-contained space colonies; colonists could experiment with a wide variety of social structures and political systems. And if things got a bit crowded, even in the size of an entire planetary system, there is all of interstellar space to head for. Which brings up perhaps the major rationalisation for interplanetary, hence interstellar, exploration, exploitation, and colonisation. Species survival.

Once a technological civilisation spreads itself out, first throughout their planetary system, hence into interstellar space, the odds that a disaster, natural or manmade, could result in the total destruction of that civilisation, becomes increasingly remote. Consider if you will how vulnerable our race is to future extinction if we remain confined to this planet. Daily news reports, our foreign, defence, and environmental reporters, should and do keep pointing this out, even if indirectly. If mankind were to spread itself throughout even "nearby" interstellar space, nothing short of the end of the universe, the destruction of our galaxy, or a massive supernova could wipe us out. Expand throughout the entire galaxy and even the supernova threat is removed.

Further, there is nothing physically impossible about interplanetary, or interstellar space flight. The major problems are economic and having the collective will and desire to do it - not technological in nature.

Nor are the supposed problems of time and distance really problems at all, as we will shortly see.

Premise Two: Space travel is both desirable and feasible, and if not quite yet, will shortly be within the capabilities of our own civilisation, far less one hundreds, thousands, even millions of years our senior.

Travelling into space is one thing for an ETI which could be behind the UFO phenomena. Finding our planet is quite something else again, in particular given problems in time and distance, and of course the hazards and costs involved thrown in for good measure.

Space is BIG, and planet earth is so tiny in comparison. How would we be found as it is unlikely that we have created a big enough technological noise for ETI to have detected us via remote sensing, given our young age, the limiting velocity of light and the sheer vastness of even our local stellar neighborhood. Must we postulate that we were discovered by some million-to-one freak encounter by some alien interstellar ship? Not really, for the odds are close to unity that our discovery was inevitable given the second premise.

The galaxy may be big, but it has also been around for a very long time, and time can turn the statistically improbable into the inevitable. In fact, all one has to believe in is one technologically advanced space-oriented civilisation, with an age though several millions of years senior to our own. That's not difficult in a galaxy of some 10^{11} stars; an age of 14 to 20 billion years! There is more than enough time, for such a civilisation, to have explored every nook and cranny of our galaxy, at velocities that we could achieve today (in about 1 billion years), or if achieving even 1% the speed of light (about 2 orders of magnitude greater than our current abilities) reducing that to 10 million years. Ten million years is but a drop in the galaxy's time bucket; 1% the speed of light well within our theoretical range within a generation or two. The exploration could be carried out in person, or, in the first instance, by their representatives - the (artificially) intelligent robot.

Manned space flight is expensive. Unmanned space flight is relatively cheap, if exploration is a goal, and which of course must come before the exploitation and colonisation phases. Therefore, it is logical to assume that space exploration, the initial steps, will be carried out by expendable machines, and the more ultra-intelligent they are, billions of miles from home in an unknown environment, the better. These ultra-intelligent von Neumann (after the researcher into artificial intelligence) probes, capable

of survival in space and self-repair (to some extent), powered by nuclear energy, and programmed to reproduce themselves (using the natural (mineral and energy) resources in space) and radio back their data and discoveries, could spread like a cancer throughout the galaxy. Time and distance would mean nothing to such probes of course.

This isn't the idle speculations only to be found between the pages of science fiction, if you consider the leaps and bounds in our own terrestrial computer technological abilities. The increase, for example, in sophistication between Mariner IV (launched to Mars in 1964) and Voyager 2 (launched 13 years later) is staggering. What will another 13 years bring; 130 years produce? Perhaps all ETI our senior is of an artificially intelligent nature - the next evolutionary advance!

Anyway, for the cost of one such unmanned reproducible probe, exploring at 1% the speed of light, the entire galaxy would be spread throughout with such probes, like the spread of a bushfire on a windy day, and explored and re-explored in 10 million years, a fraction of the galaxy's age. Multiply that by one civilisation launching many such probes, and/or the existence of many such probe-launching civilisations, and it wouldn't be long before the existence of planet earth was noted and logged. Unless serious scientific speculation is far off the mark; if ETI is as abundant as we think it is, and in particular through the use of a von Neumann probe strategy, it has been calculated that our solar system should have received an exploring visit roughly once every 100,000 years. (Nor does the argument alter very much if one postulates in-person exploration rather than via artificial intelligence.)

No doubt such probes radioed back "nothing interesting" when scanning earth on a flyby mission (or even if programmed to swing into solar orbit for constant monitoring) for some considerable period of time, until...

Several hundreds of thousands to millions of years ago (if not before), earth showed the first signs of a quality of obvious interest to another intelligence(s); that is, either the development of life itself, or (more likely) intelligent life. Even if the earth had not already been visited in-person by such an alien race(s) before that point, the impetus to do so after receiving their probe's radio message of "interesting developments" would have been strong.

Premise Three: That we are a known quality to at least one ETI race, if not within the entire general galactic community, is

as much of a certainty as the numbers game coupled with a lack of hard evidence allows for.

Thus far I haven't suggested anything that hasn't been equally suggested in the hard core scientific literature. In fact, papers exist which suggest that we should be confining our search for ETI through detection of their unmanned probes currently in orbit around the sun, maybe even the earth itself. Be that as it may...

It is one thing to suggest that there exist unmanned and artificially intelligent space probes roaming the galaxy, and within our solar system, which resulted in our detection, but it is quite another to suggest the follow-up flesh-and-blood in-person visit by the owners of that probe. But then again we could well have a million or so years to play around with between the time of the probe's initial radio message, and the alien's arrival. A million years is more than enough though if velocities at 1% the speed of light are feasible, and if civilisations are scattered throughout the galaxy on average 1000 light years apart (a scientifically acceptable figure). However, from our chauvinistic, terrestrial viewpoint, 1000 light year journeys, even at 1% the speed of light, must be considered problems of time and distance to interstellar travel. However, even given those time and distance problems (if in fact they are problems), several scenarios can be logically postulated to account for the "how" in overcoming the problems arising from speculations of an in-person visitation by ETI. For example:

We chauvinistically think that an alien's life span must be akin to ours. While this may be logical using the principle of mediocrity, such aliens could have relatively lengthy life spans, making a journey to earth of no greater significance to them than was our terrestrial explorations several centuries ago, or our projected flights to Mars will be in the 21st Century. Further, even if the life span of such aliens were originally akin to ours, their medical advancements could have extended that span by an order of magnitude or greater. Advances in cybernetics - half flesh-and-blood, half machine is possible. Perhaps there exists the "six million dollar alien"! Genetic engineering; the production of a super life span, cannot be considered too way out, not given our own state-of-the-art and projected advances. Further, genetic engineering could help create an alien race suitable for space flight and living conditions. Why not? Our own scientists are thinking in such terms and applications for ourselves within several generations. Intelligence can direct it's own evolution.

A second scenario is the old science fiction standby of sus-

-pended animation, a not impossible an application for ourselves within our own technological future, given current research into cryogenics. Or, as an alternative to sending bodies, a shipment of alien eggs and sperm could be made, to be thawed, fertilized, developed, and instructed by remote control upon arrival.

Another possibility is the space colony ark. This would be a multi-generation starship whose function is akin to a scientific expedition and the follow-up of interesting unmanned probe data.

Thus far with respect to interstellar velocities, I've been thinking small. But, perhaps relativistic velocities, those approaching the speed of light, are feasible to super technological societies. Then too, perhaps super-luminary "warp-drive" velocities and/or alternate "hyper-space" pathways through space, such as travel through black holes, really are possible.

Finally, the possibility always exists that the UFO phenomena is the product of a completely artificially intelligent society which has superceded their biological creators, or that the organic beings stay at home and obtain all their data via unmanned probes.

Such logical (even if some are mind boggling) concepts allow ETI visitations. But the key point in relation to UFOs, given the number of sightings, is that such ETI must have a nearby base of operations, probably external, such as in interplanetary space or on some surface, such as the moon. Some have postulated that the moon itself is an artificially constructed space (ark) ship, covered with rock debris for protection from radiation and meteors, as well as camouflage from terrestrial eyes. Admittedly, the exact natural origin of the moon is still one of the great unsolved mysteries in planetary astronomy. And while on mysteries, what about the low density, 400 km diameter, satellite of Saturn, Mimas, which has a crater 1/3rd the size of the satellite which nobody can yet explain the "how" as in how could Mimas receive such an impact and naturally survive. Further, and this is not my original observation, Mimas has an uncanny resemblance to the Death Star from Star Wars! In any event, some scientists have suggested that astronomers scan our interplanetary environment for various astro-engineered alien artifacts, in particular within the asteroid belt, a handy source of supply for minerals and other resources. Even if done, the job wouldn't be easy, in particular because of the distance, and if the aliens use camouflage. The latter would be logical as UFOs, if ETI controlled, exhibit behaviour not conducive to expecting open "take me to your leader" contact, nor the exploitation or colonisation of earth. And why should they when there is all of interplanetary space to roam around in? At-a-

distance and elusive close-in observation with selective sampling seems to be their modus operandi. Scientific exploration in other words.

Premise Four: There is nothing impossible, improbable, or even illogical in suggesting that ETI has been and/or is now present within our own near earth environment.

The suggestive evidence for this is multi-faceted. There are the historical and recent records of astronomical phenomena, not always easily dismissed as natural, such as spots transversing the sun where no spots should be; transient lunar phenomena (TLP); flashes of light of Mars; and some curious shapes (artifacts?) photographed on both the lunar and Martian surfaces.

There have been astronautical phenomena such as off-again, on-again satellites; satellites detecting what have been glossed over as "zoo animals" (such as the Vela incident of 22 September 1979); and satellites which have gone totally walk-a-bout and vanished without trace or explanation (such as Satcom III and Ayame 2).

Geophysical phenomena could be taken as suggestive. For example, the Tunguska, Siberia explosion of 30 June 1908; or the series of mysterious sonic booms off the American east coast in late 1977/early 1978.

Historical mysteries too play a suggestive role, the most obvious of which are certain select disappearances of aircraft, ships, and human beings. Then too are biological mysteries, such as sightings of weird creatures, for example, Mothman in West Virginia, in 1967.

Then there are the various myths and legends from around the world suggestive of the presence of super-beings. Archaeological mysteries have been suggested by some as showing the influence of "ancient astronauts". Now most of that sort of evidence and speculation is clearly wrong; often manufactured to sell sensational books. But beneath the thick covering of fertiliser could easily lie a sprout of truth.

This then is a theoretical base upon which the plausibility of UFOs having a causality with ETI can rest. This, coupled with the evidence provided through UFO reports themselves, make for an even stronger causality link between ETI and UFOs. If no UFO report, past, present, or future, ever proves to be the "smoking gun" link to ETI, I for one will be very surprised, for if not, by all that is logical and possible, the UFO mirrors what one could rationally expect, given the scenario I have generated.

Premise Five: Extraterrestrials - here and now!

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

by Mark Moravec

In a paper presented at UFOCON 6 in October 1981, I proposed that certain UFO experiences could be explained in terms of known psychological processes. Current research into altered states of consciousness was deemed to be particularly relevant (Moravec, 1981a).

An altered state of consciousness (ASC) can be defined as "any mental state(s), induced by various physiological, psychological, or pharmacological maneuvers or agents, which can be recognized subjectively by the individual himself (or by an objective observer of the individual) as representing a sufficient deviation in subjective experience or psychological functioning from certain norms for that individual during alert, waking consciousness. This sufficient deviation may be represented by a greater preoccupation than usual with internal sensations or mental processes, changes in the formal characteristics of thought, and impairment of reality testing to various degrees" (Ludwig, 1972, p 11).

In the UFOCON paper, the following ASC-UFO Hypothesis was presented: Predisposed individuals, in certain situations, undergo an altered state of consciousness during which vivid, subjective sensations are experienced and interpreted in a personally meaningful (UFO) context (Moravec, 1981a). As examples of ASCs in the UFO context, cases which appeared to involve amnesias, fugues, possessions and multiple personalities were discussed. Readers are referred to the above paper for a full definition and discussion of the above terms; the implications of the ASC-UFO Hypothesis; case examples which support the hypothesis; and a suggested integrated psychological explanation for UFO experiences.

In this paper, I intend to further explore the above themes and to examine cases which involve time distortion, automatic writing, autohypnosis and hypnotic regression. I will also look at the possibility that other anomalous phenomena such as out-of-body experiences, lucid dreams, near-death experiences and drug-induced hallucinations result from the same psychological processes occurring during altered states of consciousness.

Time Distortion and Altered States

A number of UFO percipients have described a change in the perceived passage of time during their experience.

In the Dapple Gray Lane, California case of the early 1970s, two percipients encountered a non-humanoid, brain-like entity. One of the percipients reported, while hypnotically regressed, that he had been transported into a "room" where the entity communicated with him. At one point in the sighting, one percipient stated that the other percipient seemed to be running in slow motion back to their car. The investigator suggests that perhaps the object caused a time aberration, creating two different rates of time-passage (Druffel, 1979). A simpler explanation is that the time distortion is an expected perception by someone experiencing an ASC.

A young American contactee living in Adelphi, Maryland, claimed a number of UFO contacts. In February, 1968, a UFO entity allegedly guided him to an isolated farm area where a large, egg-shaped object

on tripod legs was waiting. He went inside and was sealed alone in a compartment containing a contour chair and a large "TV screen". The percipient went on a trip which lasted from four to five hours. When he returned to his apartment and was confronted by his room-mates, the percipient was amazed to discover that little more than an hour had actually passed since the beginning of his experience (Keel, 1962). Whilst the "time compression" in this case does not prove the percipient experienced an ASC, it is certainly supportive of the ASC-UFO hypothesis. Obviously, the possibilities of a hoax and/or psychotic hallucination also need to be explored.

Some percipients report a lack of vehicular traffic or lack of natural environmental noises during their UFO experience. In some cases, this may simply mean that the UFO percipient was concentrating so intently on the UFO event, or was so shocked by the UFO event, that he did not notice any traffic or noises. The features are also consistent with an ASC and its associated time distortion. For if "time compression" occurs (i.e. a UFO experience which seemingly lasts for hours actually seems to occur in the space of a few minutes) then we might expect that little traffic would be noticed during those few minutes. For example:

In a complex CE3 case which took place at Blue John Cavern, near Castleton, Derbyshire, England in the autumn of 1963, a woman saw a saucer-shaped object land nearby. A ramp was let down and a space-suited man came out. The ramp was withdrawn and the saucer took off, the whole episode lasting about a minute. The "spaceman" walked to a car and drove off. A feature of the story was that although there were a lot of cars on the road that day, around the time of the landing none came along for several minutes (Oliver, 1972).

In Cherry Hill, New Jersey, USA in 1966, a carload of witnesses on a normally very busy highway saw no other traffic during their sighting of an enormous object hovering over a computer plant (Keel, 1972).

On 17th March, 1977, at eight pm, a woman was driving near Volos, Greece, when she sighted a stationary luminous object with red and white lights and yellow "reflections" in the shape of a cross. The instruments of the car allegedly went "crazy" and showed false readings and the motor cut out. The object made a turn over a field and disappeared within seconds. Suddenly the car moved off at high speed and the percipient had trouble trying to reduce speed. The percipient thought it strange that no cars passed her during the next half hour, especially since the road usually has much traffic (Karajas, 1980).

to conclude

Whilst it may be tempting that "no traffic" means an ASC is being experienced by the percipient, which in turn means that such UFO experiences are entirely subjective, cases which feature multiple witnesses or physical effects indicate that non-psychological factors may also be involved.

"Time distortion" and some "no traffic" cases do not prove that an ASC was being experienced at the time of the UFO sighting. However, such cases do offer some support to a psychological hypothesis of UFO experiences as a simpler alternative to such exotic hypotheses as the manipulation of time and space by extraterrestrials or time travellers.

What do the findings of psychology offer about the phenomenon of an altered sense of time? Research into altered states of consciousness has shown that a "disturbed time sense" is a frequent feature of such states of mind. "Sense of time and chronology become greatly altered.

Subjective feelings of timelessness, time coming to a standstill, the acceleration or slowing of time, and so on, are common. Time may also seem of infinite or infinitesimal duration" (Ludwig, 1972, p 16). In fact, it has been suggested that a change in the sense of time passage is such a consistent feature of trance states that it can be used to indicate a shift in consciousness (Cahn, 1979).

Why is the sense of time distorted during an ASC? A number of explanations have been suggested: "First, because mental contents and awareness processes which are not connected to time needs or markers are strengthened. These include daydreams, fantasies, event memories, peak experiences, emotions, and the pure awareness state. Second, because goals, anticipations, and expectancies are decreased in prominence, reducing attention given to possible changes in the environment, which decreases awareness of future states. Third, memory of immediate past experience is decreased in strength, which reduces knowledge of change and moves attention to the present. If consciousness is completely passive, and non-time elements fill attention, then the experience seems timeless. If some consciousness processes and associations are maintained time will seem to have slowed, as attention moves among the various contents" (Anonymous, 1972, p 350).

We have seen that a number of UFO experiences feature a change in the perceived passage of time. We have also seen that a disturbed time sense is a frequent feature of altered states of consciousness. Thus the indications are that some UFO experiences do involve an alteration in the usual state of consciousness. It now remains to examine other features of UFO experiences which support the ASC-UFO Hypothesis.

Automatic Writing

Automatic writing is "writing carried out without conscious control" (Chaplin, 1975, p 49). Like fugues and multiple personalities, automatic writing is an example of an automatism or dissociation of personality "in which unconscious factors temporarily gain control, act independently and dictate behavior" (Kolb, 1968, p 75). Amnesia may or may not be associated with the experience.

Subjective belief is often associated with automatic writing. An individual may believe that the messages received originate from a discarnate entity or a UFO entity. Where the percipient repeatedly receives automatic writings from a "source" which can be said to have its own personality, then the experience can be designated as an example of dual or multiple personality.

There have been a number of UFO cases where "communications" were received via automatic writing. In a recent Australian case, a group of women claimed to have received communications initially from "spirits of the dead", and later from "space entities". The woman who received messages via automatic writing explained that during these experiences her mind is blank and in a "meditative state". "I know that somebody or something makes my hand move. I can't write anything with my left hand yet its only that which is written with... My mind is a blank but I'm aware that my hand is moving. And when they (i.e. the other group members) ask questions I can hear the questions they ask. But it is not my mind that's giving the answers, because the answers suddenly come out and my hand starts writing. So its like being separate from the body... Somebody else is taking over my mind, and its their thought going in here and making me write" (Moravec, 1980).

An Argentinian case of automatic writing in a UFO context occurred in 1969. "Whilst watching a group of UFOs manoeuvring about, an

Argentinian was suddenly overcome by a sort of trance, and went and sat down in a neighbouring room and began to write at giddy speed, a text in an incomprehensible language followed by a brief message in Spanish announcing other contacts. Contacts which are now taking place regularly. During these sessions of communication with the extraterrestrials, the Argentinian's pulse stops and everything takes place as though he were dead" (Flying Saucer Review, 1969, p 31, citing France-Inter press service report dated 7/5/69).

Automatic writing was involved in the classic case of "Marian Keech", a suburban housewife who led a 1950s UFO cult in midwestern USA. Mrs Keech received messages via automatic writing and which were supposedly sent by "superior beings from a planet called 'Clarion'". These beings had been visiting the earth in flying saucers. The contacts began when Mrs Keech woke up one morning with a tingling or numbness in her arm. "My whole arm felt warm right up to the shoulder... I had the feeling that someone was trying to get my attention. Without knowing why, I picked up a pencil and a pad that were lying on the table near my bed. My hand began to write in another handwriting." Mrs Keech eventually spent up to 14 hours per day on automatic writing. Through her network of friends, a movement of initially several dozen people gathered around her and became committed to the beliefs of the group's accumulating folklore. The "Guardians", as the beings came to be known, gave the group teachings and advice about religious matters and cosmology, and predicted future events including a flood and cataclysm (which did not come to pass) (Festinger, Riecken and Schacter, 1964).

Of course, automatic writing has been with us a long time. Many messages received by this method have been attributed by the medium to be coming from the spirits of the dead. As UFO experiences became more common, a proportion of messages were attributed to UFO entities. Thus sociological factors appear to play a role in the interpretation of automatic writing experiences. As far as the automatic writing experience itself, there is no evidence to support any notion other than the messages originate from the medium's own unconscious mind.

Or, in the words of psychiatrist William Sadler, one of the early pioneers in the scientific investigation of American mediums: "There is a close relationship between automatic writing and speaking and so called trances and visions. Much has been learned about automatic writing by studying multiple personality. The automatic writer may appear to be perfectly normal and may be engaged in conversation with someone, but if a pencil is placed in his hand, he will immediately begin to write and will continue almost indefinitely; he may produce a carefully composed, logically sound, and sometimes rhetorically exquisite essay, all without his central consciousness being aware of these transactions.

"The psychology of automatic writing is practically the same as that of crystal-gazing, shell-hearing, and hypnosis. In this case the performances of the marginal consciousness are projected outward along the motor line of writing... The central consciousness does not know what is going on out in the marginal realms until the words that have been automatically written are subsequently seen.

"To the central consciousness such messages naturally appear to have come from another world, so that it is an easy matter for a psychically unbalanced person to believe that these communications are from the dead or from spirits from other spheres" (Sadler, 1947, pp 268-269).

(to be continued)

ACUFOS BIBLIOGRAPHY SERVICE: EXO BIOLOGY - EXOTIC BIOCHEMISTRIES AND ENVIRONMENTS

(by) John Prytz

Compiler's Note: There is little doubt that extraterrestrial life, if composed of and restricted to terrestrial-like patterns of biochemistry and environments will be less abundant than if the full range of imaginative science fictional scenarios have some basis in reality. There has been some serious scientific speculation and experimentation concerning (extraterrestrial) life-not-as-we-know-it, as this data base shows.

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